

**2008 Final Budget Message**  
**Franklin County Commission President Mary Jo Kilroy**  
**Tuesday, December 18, 2007**

Our next agenda item is Resolution number 1102-07: Resolution authorizing the annual appropriation measure for fiscal year 2008. Throughout this year's budget process the Commissioners have balanced our public policy priorities and mandated programs against fiscal reality. We are in a tough budget environment, but we have used sound fiscal judgment to make sure that we meet the challenges facing our community without raising taxes. Through careful fiscal management, we can roll-off a quarter cent of the County's share of the sales tax.

As President of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, I am pleased to present a structurally balanced budget that promotes public safety and security, economic development and jobs creation, environmental sustainability and protection, health care access, and support to our veterans.

Additionally, the County has maintained the highest possible credit rating and rebuilt cash reserves according to a planned financial blueprint implemented beginning in the summer of 2005.

The County's 2008 Final Budget is \$314.9 Million dollars which represents an increase of 2.8% verses the 2007 approved budget. It was a tremendous challenge to hold the level of growth below the current rate of inflation but we were able to do so by focusing on our priorities, those items that make the most difference in our community.

The County's 2008 all funds budget for 2008 is \$1.6 Billion which allows for the execution of several major capital projects such as the New Courts Building, Animal Shelter, and Huntington Park.

**Public Safety and Security**

Public safety and security is a challenge for any level of government. Concern for the well-being of our citizens and ensuring safe and secure neighborhoods is a top priority for this board. The use of technology and computers are vital components of conducting business, but these technological advancements also increasingly are put to criminal use. The changing face of crime and threats to our community must be addressed.

Our commitment to public safety and security is evidenced in this budget by the fact that 57% or \$177.6 Million of the general fund budget is committed to law enforcement, public safety, and security, and justice. The final budget adds personnel to the Sheriff's Office to meet mandates associated with the Sexual Offender Registration Notifications, improve the jail intake process, jail custody officer safety, and special investigative units to combat illegal activities such as drug trafficking and child pornography internet crime.

The final budget includes funding to add a criminal investigator and Child Pornography Assistant Prosecutor to help prosecute individuals that prey on vulnerable individuals in our community.

Providing for a safe and secure community goes beyond physical protection. It also includes a strong economy that starts with responsible fiscal management.

### **Strong and Responsible Financial Management**

The Economic Stabilization fund (or the “Rainy Day” fund) will be reserved in 2008 at the maximum allowed by the Ohio Revised code at \$14.8 Million. The General Fund cash reserves will be increased to \$110.6 Million by the end of 2007. The 2008 budget also funds Contingency at the maximum allowed and provides for a one-half million contribution to the 27<sup>th</sup> pay period reserve fund. These measures will further enhance the County’s position as one of the most fiscally sound and well managed governments in the State of Ohio and nationally.

### **Jobs and Economic Opportunity:**

And while Franklin County enjoys a healthier economy than other parts of the state...we understand the need to continue to create good employment opportunities and that is why we are directing resources to:

- the Rickenbacker Intermodal Facilities (\$4.3M) expected to create 20,000 jobs at employers like Whirlpool...
- Experience Columbus (\$1M) to market the central Ohio region and bring sales tax dollars to our community...
- COSI (\$1M),...
- the Lincoln Theater (\$1M), for efforts to revitalize a community that once a historic and cultural center...
- the Scioto Mile green development project that will become an attraction for festivals and concerts, bringing visitors to our community while beautifying downtown and,
- the Columbus-Franklin County Finance Port Authority (\$150,000) ...all to generate good-paying jobs and business opportunities for Franklin County families.

This budget also provides for continuing work on our capital projects including the new courthouse, ballpark and animal shelter. The work on these projects will increase jobs by 2300+ during the heaviest construction in 2008. These will be good, quality jobs, that provide a strong quality of life for those workers. Keeping families strong is critical to the health of Franklin County.

### **Support to Children and Families**

Fifty-eight percent or \$945 Million of the county’s all funds budget is allocated to provide assistance to families in need of services through Job and Family Services such as Medicaid, Day Care Assistance, Job Training, and temporary financial assistance. Vital support is also provided to individuals through funds allocated to Children Services, ADAMH, MR/DD, and the Office on Aging. We are working to make our operations more accountable and efficient. Jobs and Family Services has implemented a “Total Case Management” remodel or TCM. This has led to

more efficient services and allows for progress to be made on making better use of technology to serve our families in need.

### **Strengthening Families**

There are many new challenges facing families in Franklin County.

Recent news reports indicate that local food pantries are seeing a 50-percent increase in the number of customers and that supplies are devastatingly low...next year, \$100,000 will be provided specifically to food banks to address their needs and assist with eliminating hunger in our community.

As the year has progressed, each of us has been touched by the past year's Mortgage Foreclosure Crisis...we have all heard the stories of predatory lending and have watched as neighbors were forced to leave their homes. Next year, housing officials predict that more Adjustable Rate Mortgages will reset and rates will sky-rocket... It is a problem that permeates all levels of government and society. Franklin County is preparing. This year, Commissioners convened the first countywide meetings to address the mortgage foreclosure crisis affecting many hardworking families in our community. This bi-partisan committee is currently working to evaluate legislation, assistance and county operations to help families stay in their homes. Specifically, next year's budget includes \$100,000 to support counseling, outreach and other measures to sustain these efforts.

### **Housing and Emergency Shelter**

Our commitment to affordable housing will continue. The 2008 Budget provides over \$6 Million dollars to the Community Shelter Board and The Affordable Housing Trust. Each day, those funds help the Community Shelter Board find safe and secure shelter for 1,000 people.

### **Honoring our Veterans**

The 2008 Budget also includes additional funding to the Veterans Service Commissions for expanded outreach to veterans with special needs and women veterans. The final budget provides funding to support emergency financial assistance to veterans to cover expenses such as rent and mortgage assistance, gas vouchers, food, and utility payment subsidies, so that those who served their country so honorably and selflessly are not forgotten or pushed aside, but are given the quality of life they deserve.

Also included is funding for emergency home improvements through a safe housing program, continued support for a Veteran's Meals on Wheels program and medical transportation.

For the first time, the Franklin County Budget also includes an expanded preventive dental program that will allow veterans to get basic dental cleanings and check ups.

## **Going “Green”**

All of us are faced with the climate crisis. It has been well documented in scientific journals, newspapers, film, TV and literature that the planet is indeed in peril. We must all individually take steps to reduce our carbon footprints. Government must also play its role and set an example.

As the author of the County’s “green” policy approved by Commissioners last year, it has been a pleasure and encouraging to work with our employees and the community to think “green.”

Franklin County is making great “sustainable” strides. In fact, for the first time ever, agencies were asked to submit their green initiatives as part of their budget. The information provided was fascinating. PFM reports that countywide paper and cardboard recycling efforts have saved close to 5,000 trees and that 943 pieces of IT equipment were recycled... that equates to removing 10 cars from highways for one year and saves 7,223 gallons of gasoline!

Our green efforts don’t stop there. Agencies such as the Office on Aging and the Clerk’s Office have implemented near-paperless case management and office systems. And the Department of Fleet Management reports that approximately 65,000 gallons of alternative fuels (50,000 gallons of e-85 and 15,000 gallons of CNG) are used annually supporting our local economy and reducing our dependency on foreign oil. In 2008, the use of alternative fuels in vehicles serviced by Fleet Management is expected to rise to nearly 41-percent.

Green isn’t just good economic and environmental policy, it’s smart for our health too.

## **A Healthy County**

Air pollution, more simply known as Smog, is hazardous to all of us and is especially detrimental to the health and breathing ability of individuals who suffer from asthma.

To combat this important public health issue, the Breathing Association will receive \$50,000 next year to continue the operation of the Free Lung Health Clinic that was opened earlier this year.

Epidemics such as asthma plague so many of our community’s most vulnerable residents...our seniors and children. In fact, childhood obesity is rapidly rising throughout the world. According to the Mayo Clinic, “In just two decades, the prevalence of overweight children doubled for U.S. kids ages 6 to 11 — and tripled for American teenagers.” Those figures are astonishing and are driving the increase of diabetes in our schools and community.

In Franklin County alone, one in ten individuals will develop diabetes. County funding of \$200,000 for the Central Ohio Diabetes Association will assist diagnosed individuals receive the tools they need to detect their condition, prevent complications and learn to live with the challenges associated with the disease.

The health and wellness of our entire community is important and the 2008 Budget continues funding for the Columbus Aids Task Force, the Ben Franklin Tuberculosis Clinic and the Columbus Neighborhood Health centers. It also provides support for Access Health Columbus. I have been personally proud to champion and advocate for increased access to affordable health care on behalf of the thousands of people in our community who are vulnerable and who lack timely access to appropriate health care services. Support of \$500,000 to Access Health has allowed for \$811,000 in financial investments from other public-private partners, a return on our investment of 160%. This collaboration of public and private partners equates to over \$4,000,000 in donated health care services highlighted by:

- Over 800 doctors and 12 hospitals donating professional services to care for vulnerable people
- Over 2,000 timely medical (specialty care) referrals
- Over 10,000 prescriptions
- Over 1,200 transportation services for medical appointments

### **Conclusion: Collaboration and a Look Back**

The partnership and collaboration with Access Health is not unique. The 2008 Franklin County Budget has been built to meet the needs of Franklin County. It is a reflection of many broader community goals and partnerships. Job creators like the Rickenbacker Intermodal Facility couldn't be done without the cooperation of municipalities in the South-eastern part of the county; the Lincoln Theater revitalization and the development of the Scioto Mile wouldn't come to fruition without the city of Columbus. As Commissioners we have the responsibility to respond to the challenges facing our community in a fiscally responsible way and must do so in a tough budget environment.

The 2008 Budget is a fiscally responsible and balanced budget that reflects only a 2.8-percent increase from the 2007 Approved Budget...still remaining below the Consumer Price Index for the Midwest. The Budget also keeps the Commissioners' commitment to rolling back a quarter-cent of the County's sales tax.

Before asking for a motion to approve the 2008 Budget and hearing additional comments for my colleagues, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the staff... Don Brown, County Administrator, Ken Wilson, Budget Director, our analysts who worked tirelessly and all of the County Elected Officials and the staff of 34 agencies whose \$333 Million worth of General Fund requests were reviewed and analyzed. The budget presented here this morning represents a general fund budget of \$314.9 Million and accurately and responsibly reflects the priorities of our Board while balancing the needs of the community with available resources.

At this time, I would ask for a motion to approve Resolution #1102-07.